

Goodman,

42.

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas,
June 1, 1931.

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director, 2d Year Class, Command and
General Staff School, Fort Leavenworth,
Kansas.

SUBJECT: The Russian leadership and orders for the
defense at the battle of Wa-fan-gou, with
particular reference to Generals Kuropatkin
and Stackelburg.

I. PAPERS ACCOMPANYING.

1. A bibliography for this study.
2. A sketch showing the principal villages and terrain
features in the vicinity of Wa-fan-gou.

II. THE STUDY PRESENTED.

What qualities of leadership did Generals Kuropatkin
and Stackelburg exercise or fail to exercise in connection
with the Battle of Wa-fan-gou as shown by the actions and
orders of these Russian commanders?

III. HISTORICAL FACTS RELATING TO THE STUDY.

Although General Kuropatkin was commander in chief of the
Russian Army of Manchuria, he did not have a free hand in directing
the operations of this army, but was subordinate to Admiral Alexiev,
who was the Czar's viceroy in the far east (1). Kuropatkin's plan
of campaign was to avoid any offensive movement against the Japanese
forces on the Kwan-tung Peninsula until the arrival of reinforce-
ments from Russia would give him numerical superiority (2). He
decided to concentrate his forces at Liao Yang (3) and to protect
this concentration by sending out covering forces to delay any Jap-
anese advance from the east or south (4). Kuropatkin estimated that
he would have numerical superiority by August, 1904 (5).

- (1) (3-81. 5-257. 6-761.)
- (2) (1-172. 3-87, 88.)
- (3) (3-92. 6-760.)
- (4) (3-93, 94. 4-10.)
- (5) (3-93. 4-17.)

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On May 19, 1904, Admiral Alexiev, who strongly believed that active operations should begin at once in order to relieve the pressure against Port Arthur (6), placed two alternatives before General Kuropatkin as follows:

- a. To contain the Second Japanese Army (commanded by General Oku) which was operating on the southern part of the Kwan-tung Peninsula, by sending a portion of his troops to oppose it while the bulk of his army pushed the Japanese First Army (commanded by General Kuroki) back across the Yalu River
- b. To contain the Japanese First Army (Kuroki) and to operate against the Japanese Second Army (Oku). (7)

Kuropatkin at first opposed both of these plans, on the ground that adopting either would force him to give up his original intention of not assuming the offensive until he was in superior force (8). Also, he felt that a movement against Kuroki was impracticable due to lack of necessary transport and equipment, (9) while a movement to the south against Oku would not be profitable and would expose his line of communications to a threat from Japanese troops landing west of Kaiping (10).

On May 27th, influenced by news of the Russian defeat at Nan Shan (11), Kuropatkin indicated that he would send a force to the south against the Japanese Second Army (12). By the end of May he ordered General Stackelburg (13), who commanded the 1st Siberian Army Corps (14), to concentrate his force at Kaiping and to make preparations for an advance to the south in the direction of Wa-fen-gou (15).

On June 4th, Admiral Alexiev received a telegram from the Russian Imperial Headquarters at St. Petersburg stating that the relief of Port Arthur was considered imperative and that General Kuropatkin was charged with the entire responsibility for the fate of Port Arthur (16).

On June 7th, Kuropatkin issued written instructions to Stackelburg in which the mission of Stackelburg's corps was defined as follows:

- a. By an advance towards Port Arthur to draw upon itself the greatest possible enemy force, thereby weakening the enemy forces operating on the Kwan-tung Peninsula
- b. In order to accomplish this result, movement against the hostile covering force to be executed swiftly and energetically in order to crush these advanced detachments in case they prove to be weak
- c. Decisive action to be avoided in case superior forces are encountered, and in no case to commit all reserves to action until the situation is clear

(6) (2-2. 1-172. 3-170.)
 (7) (1-173. 2-2. 3-171.)
 (8) (2-2,3. 3-173.)
 (9) (2-2,3. 1-173.)
 (10) (2-2,3. 3-232.)
 (11) (1-173. 2-2,3.)
 (12) (Ibid.)
 (13) (1-173. 2-5. 3-229.)
 (14) (3-229. 4-33. 2-5.)
 (15) (2-4. 3-229. 4-33.)
 (16) (3-174. 1-173. 6-761.)

- d. The final object of the southerly movement to be the capture of the Chin-Chou position and thereafter to make a further advance on Port Arthur (17).

To carry out the above assigned mission, Stackelburg had an available force of approximately 30,000 men and between 80 and 100 guns (18). This force was known as the "Southern Detachment" (19) and consisted of the following troops:

9th Eastern Siberian Division	General Kondratovitch
1st Eastern Siberian Division	General Gerngross
2d Brigade, 35th Division	General Glasko
Composite Siberian Cavalry Division	General Simonov (20)

Although Kuropatkin had informed Stackelburg that the object of the southerly movement was the capture of the Chin-Chou position, due to the threats from the Japanese troops advancing northwest from Takushan and from the Japanese ships in the Gulf of Liao-Tung, Kuropatkin did not give Stackelburg permission to concentrate his troops until June 12th, when he learned that the Takushan force had halted and was fortifying a position near Hsiu-yen and that the Japanese ships had withdrawn from the Gulf of Liao-Tung (21).

On May 30th, advance cavalry of the Southern Detachment under Samsonov made contact with Japanese cavalry in the vicinity of Wu-chia-tun (22). In this engagement the Russian cavalry proved to be superior to that of the Japanese. On June 3d another cavalry collision took place when Samsonov made a reconnaissance in force (23).

Stackelburg arrived at Wa-fan-gou on June 5th and ordered Samsonov to take up a position with his cavalry about 5½ miles south of Wa-fan-gou (24). On June 7th, General Simonov assumed command of Samsonov's advance detachment and pushed it forward as far as Wa-fang-tien (25). On June 10th Stackelburg reinforced Simonov's advance cavalry detachment with an infantry brigade (26). Meanwhile Stackelburg had detrained his troops at Wa-fan-gou and had selected a position to be fortified at that place. Work on the position was started on June 9th (27).

Stackelburg's plan was to await the assembly of his troops and then begin his advance to the south probably by June 17th. (28) He did not give full consideration to the possibility of a Japanese advance prior to that time (29).

- (17) (1-177. 2-10. 3-230, 231.)
- (18) (1-173. 3-234. 4-34.)
- (19) (2-5. 3-234.)
- (20) (3-234. 1-173.)
- (21) (1-179. 2-5. 6-761.)
- (22) (2-6, 7. 3-218. 4-33.)
- (23) (2-7. 4-33.)
- (24) (2-7. 4-33.)
- (25) (2-7. 1-178.)
- (26) (4-33. 1-179. 3-173.)
- (27) (2-11. 3-235.)
- (28) (2-11. 3-233. 4-33.)
- (29) (2-11. 3-233.)

The Japanese Second Army (Oku) advanced to the north on June 13th and made contact with the Russian forces in the vicinity of Wa-fang-tien. Stackelburg had gone to Kaiping for a conference with Kuropatkin and was on his way back to Wa-fan-gou that morning when he received a report from his cavalry that the Japanese were advancing from Pulantien with 20,000 men. He believed this estimate to be exaggerated as he considered this to be a reconnaissance in force (30). However, by the evening of June 13th, Stackelburg estimated that Oku would attack the next day, and as all of his troops had not yet arrived at Wa-fan-gou, he decided to await the Japanese attack on the position he had prepared in the vicinity of Wa-fan-gou (31). Accordingly, he issued the following order:

"The enemy, strength about two divisions, is moving south of Wa-fang-tien Station. The troops of the I Siberian Corps, in case of the enemy taking the offensive towards Telissu (Wa-fan-gou) are to occupy the position organized to the north of Wu-chia-tun (the Wa-fan-gou position) on either side of the railway." (32)

He also instructed Simonov's cavalry to retire on Ta-fang-shen village and establish itself west of that place, covering the right flank of the Wa-fan-gou position and to observe the roads leading to Huang-chia-tun and Hui-chia-tun (33).

Oku continued the advance on June 14th and the Russian troops fell back on the main position at Wa-fan-gou as ordered (34). This position was located just south of Wa-fan-gou astride the Fu-chou-ho River and the Mukden-Port Arthur railway line. It covered a front of about 4½ miles (35). At this time the Fu-chou-ho River was everywhere fordable (36).

During the fighting on the afternoon of June 14th the Japanese 3d Division made a strong attack on the Russian left wing to the east of the railway, which was repulsed without great difficulty (37). As the Russian forces had only reported the presence of two Japanese divisions (the 3d and 5th) and as no heavy fighting had been reported west of the railway, Stackelburg believed that Oku was making his main effort against the left of his position and he decided to make a counterattack against the Japanese right early on June 15th (38). At this time Stackelburg was unaware of the presence of the Japanese 4th Division west of the railway as his cavalry did not reconnoiter to the west and southwest but had contented itself with moving to the vicinity of Ta-fang-shan and observing certain roads as ordered (39).

- (30) (3-236. 1-179,180.)
- (31) (1-181. 2-25. 3-237.)
- (32) (3-236,273.)
- (33) (3-236,237. 1-181.)
- (34) (3-239,240.)
- (35) (3-241, Sketch No. II, Telissu. 2-Sketch No.3, Wa-fan-gou.)
- (36) (2-23. 3-241.)
- (37) (1-184. 3-246.)
- (38) (1-184. 2-34. 3-259.)
- (39) (2-34. 3-278.)

On the evening of June 14th, Gerngross' division was in position on the heights of Wu-chia-tun where it had repulsed the attack of the Japanese 3d Division. Glasko's brigade was at Tsui-chia-tun. Stackelburg sent separate messages to these commanders giving both of them the mission of making a counterattack against the Japanese right early the next morning and directing them to support each other and to preconcert with each other regarding the details of the counterattack. In his message to General Glasko, Stackelburg gave instructions as to a line of retreat in case retreat became unavoidable (40).

At 9:00 P.M. that night Glasko started to march from Tsui-chia-tun towards Hu-chia-tun, at the same time sending an aide to General Gerngross informing that officer of the instructions he had received and to come to some understanding as to the details of the counterattack (41). This aide returned during the night with a message from Gerngross which read as follows:

"I am on the road between Wo-fang-wo-pun and Wu-chia-tun. If the general commanding (Stackelburg) desires an attack to be made at daylight, it might succeed." (42)

Glasko then sent an officer to General Stackelburg requesting further instructions but received no satisfactory answer (43).

Thus by daylight June 15th, Gerngross, apparently still waiting for Glasko's brigade to come up, stood fast; while Glasko, not knowing definitely what he was expected to do, remained at Hu-chia-tun. (44)

At about 6:40 A.M. June 15th, after a long discussion with his officers, Glasko finally decided to advance (45). At this time he received a note from Gerngross which read as follows:

"Attack, We will support you from the heights." (46)

About the time Glasko was ready to move forward to the attack (about 8:00 A.M.), he received a message from Stackelburg which contained the following instructions:

"In case the Japanese advance with superior forces against our center or elsewhere, the Corps will fall back to Wan-chia-ling. In this event General Glasko will hold out as long as possible on the line: Tsui-chia-tun - Kou-chia-tun in order to allow the Corps retiring north from Telissu (Wa-fan-gou) to clear the defile north of Tsui-chia-tun. If the Japanese retire, the troops will halt and await further orders." (47)

Glasko, being again confused as to what he should do, halted his advance and remained inactive until about 10:00 A.M., when he received an order to attack vigorously, Meanwhile Gerngross was fighting alone. (48)

- (40) (1-187. 2-34,35. 3-262,263.)
- (41) (3-263.)
- (42) (1-187. 2-37,38. 3-263.)
- (43) (1-187. 3-264.)
- (44) (1-188. 3-264,267.)
- (45) (1-187,188. 2-41. 3-267.)
- (46) (1-188. 2-38. 3-267.)
- (47) (1-188. 3-267.)
- (48) (3-268.)

About 11:00 A.M. Stackelburg, who had remained at Wa-fah-gou Station in order to be in communication with the Commander in Chief (Kuropatkin), received news of the enveloping attack on the right of the Russian line by the 19th Brigade of the Japanese 4th Division. His cavalry had reported this hostile movement at 7:00 A.M. that morning but Stackelburg did not receive this report until nearly four hours later. As the Russian right was slowly giving way, Stackelburg personally led two battalions of the 34th Rifle Regiment, the only available reserves at this time, to relieve the pressure on the right, but without success. In this attempt Stackelburg had two horses shot from under him. Shortly after this, Stackelburg issued a general order for a retirement to the north (49).

IV. OPINIONS BEARING ON THE STUDY.

1. German Official Account of the Russo-Japanese War:

"We are therefore justified in assuming that Kuropatkin actually at first intended to push south with far stronger forces. Intelligence of an advance by Japanese detachments on Sai-mat-sy and of a landing by hostile troops at Ta-ku-shan apparently made him afraid of an attack from the mountains and this may have been the reason why he abandoned his original intention." (50)

2. Colonel E. L. V. Cordonnier, French Army, Professor of Tactics at the Ecole Superieure de Guerre:

"The mind of Kuropatkin conceived the plan of campaign which was best calculated to assure victory over the armies which the Japanese had landed or might land in Manchuria. When another scheme was set before him, he accepted the task of its execution although he had no confidence in it. The Russian general's character was less eminent than his intellect." (51)

"If Kuropatkin gave Stackelburg troops enough to beat the 2d Army (Japanese), he exposed himself to the risk of Kuroki's planting himself at Liao Yang to the utter ruin of the Russian army." (52)

"He (Kuropatkin) delegated to his subordinates the offensive which he never assumed. ----- In his hands the Russian Army would avoid anything worse than semi-defeat and could never be victorious." (53)

(49) {1-191. 2-47. 3-277.)
 (50) {2-5.)
 (51) {3-177.)
 (52) {3-232.)
 (53) {3-80.)

"Thus Stackelburg remained in ignorance of the battle which he failed to guide and even to direct. Telissu (Wa-fan-gou) was the battle of incoherence." (54)

"A couple of squadrons of real cavalry would have reported the presence of a Japanese division on Stackelburg's outer flank as early as the 14th. A cossack division saw nothing and let itself be surprised." (55)

3. Lieutenant-General Zhilinski, Chief of Field Staff under Admiral Alexiev:

"The operation orders issued by Stackelburg for the 15 June were not embodied in one general order but took the form of separate memoranda, indifferently worded. Units were in ignorance of the general situation with the result that there was a lack of cohesion and confusion ensued." (56)

4. Lieutenant-Colonel Komarov, in Nikolai Staff College Lectures:

"According to General Stackelburg an order No. 194 was issued on 14 June. We did not receive the order." (57)

5. Lord Brooke, British Observer during Russo-Japanese War:

"Rightly or wrongly historians will probably condemn Baron Stackelburg for the defeat at Wa-fan-gou. That he was outgeneraled is undeniable; but for the criticism affecting his personal conduct, there is, I am convinced, an adequate answer." (58)

6. General Kuropatkin:

"Had the railway only been ready at the beginning of hostilities, even to run only six through military trains, we would have had three army corps at Telissu (Wa-fan-gou), namely the 1st and 4th Siberian and the 10th Army Corps. The issue of this battle would have been different and this would undoubtedly have affected the whole course of the campaign for we should have secured the initiative." (59)

(54)	(3-266, 267.)
(55)	(3-77.)
(56)	(1-187.)
(57)	(3-259.)
(58)	(7-36.)
(59)	(5-258.)

7. The Author.

a. Discussion:

If General Stackelburg did not have a clear idea as to what he was expected to achieve by the movement of his force to the south, the fault was not entirely his, but rested in large part with his superior commander, General Kuropatkin, who had assigned him a mission which was as difficult to understand as it was impossible to accomplish.

As has already been brought out, in his instructions of June 7th, Kuropatkin ordered Stackelburg to crush the hostile covering forces by a swift and energetic advance; to draw upon himself the greatest possible enemy force in order to weaken the enemy forces operating on the Kwan-tung Peninsula; to avoid decisive action against superior forces and in no case to commit all his reserves to action until the situation was clear; and finally to capture the Chin-chou position with a view to a further advance on Port Arthur.

In spite of ordering a rapid advance on June 7th, Kuropatkin did not permit Stackelburg to concentrate his force until June 12th. The capture of the Chin-chou position and an advance toward Port Arthur certainly indicated an offensive mission. As Stackelburg's force consisted of only about 2½ divisions outside of his cavalry, and as the Japanese had between 4 and 5 divisions operating on the southern part of the Kwan-tung Peninsula at that time, if Stackelburg drew upon himself the greatest possible enemy force in order to relieve the pressure on Port Arthur he was pretty certain to encounter superior forces and thereby be prevented from taking any decisive action by the same order which called for decisive action in order to reach his objective.

There is no doubt that Kuropatkin did not favor relieving the pressure on Port Arthur at this time but was influenced to do so by Admiral Alexiev and pressure from the Russian government. However, once he decided on this southern movement, the responsibility was his, and he should have given Stackelburg a definite mission and provided him with sufficient means for a reasonable chance of success.

Stackelburg seems to have had the idea of advancing to meet Oku but he first wanted a fortified base before pushing his force to the south. He did not use the means available to him to find out what the Japanese intended to do and thus permitted himself to be forestalled by Oku's advance to the north on June 13th.

Instead of directing his cavalry to gain and maintain contact with the Japanese 2d Army and to obtain definite information which would disclose the Japanese strength and probable intentions, he merely ordered it to take up an advanced position about 10 miles south of his fortified position, and on June 13th he at first refused to believe the reports sent in by the cavalry as to the strength of the Japanese advance.

Although he had reinforced his advance cavalry with a brigade of infantry, he made no use of this force to delay Oku's advance and he was too willing to give up any idea which he may have had of taking the offensive even before he was sure Oku would attack. In his order issued on the evening of June 13th, although he believed the enemy to have only about 2 divisions, he was more concerned with how he would occupy the defensive position at Wa-fan-gou than with taking any aggressive or delaying action.

After the fighting on June 14th, he was misled as to the real situation because he again failed to use his cavalry properly and did not learn that the Japanese 4th Division was west of the railway line. Even though his cavalry force was made up of Cossacks instead of regular cavalry troops, these Cossacks were excellent horsemen and had demonstrated their superiority over enemy cavalry. If Stackelburg had given Simonov the definite mission of determining whether or not the enemy was sending any force to threaten his right flank, it is reasonable to believe that Simonov would have discovered the location of the Japanese 4th Division on June 14th.

Although Stackelburg's estimate of the situation on the night of June 14th was erroneous, his decision to counterattack against the Japanese right flank early on June 15th might have produced effective results if he had properly planned and coordinated this operation. Instead of issuing a clear order for the counterattack prescribing time, direction and other essential details of his plan, he sent separate messages to different commanders directing one to support the other and leaving the preparation of the plan to both of them. As an inevitable result, neither commander was responsible and instead of a coordinated attack in a decisive direction only piecemeal action took place.

By his failure to prescribe some positive and rapid means of communication between his own headquarters and that of his subordinates, Stackelburg did not know what arrangements, if any, were being made by Generals Gerngross and Glasko for the counterattack nor were these two subordinate commanders able to keep sufficiently in touch with each other to effect any cooperation.

Finally (about 8:00 A.M.) on the morning of June 15th, just as belated efforts on the parts of Gerngross and Glasko were about to produce some results, Stackelburg further complicated the situation by sending a message to Glasko, directing him to cover the retreat of the Corps in case the Japanese advanced in superior force, while in case of a Japanese retirement, the troops were to halt and await further orders. Thus once again was Stackelburg more concerned with arranging for a withdrawal in case the Japanese pushed the attack than with pushing his own counterblow.

Stackelburg showed fine courage when he personally led two battalions in an attempt to restore the right of his line which had been forced to give way by the enveloping attack of the Japanese 4th Division, but as corps commander his duty was to direct and to know what was happening to his entire force rather than to personally lead a part of it.

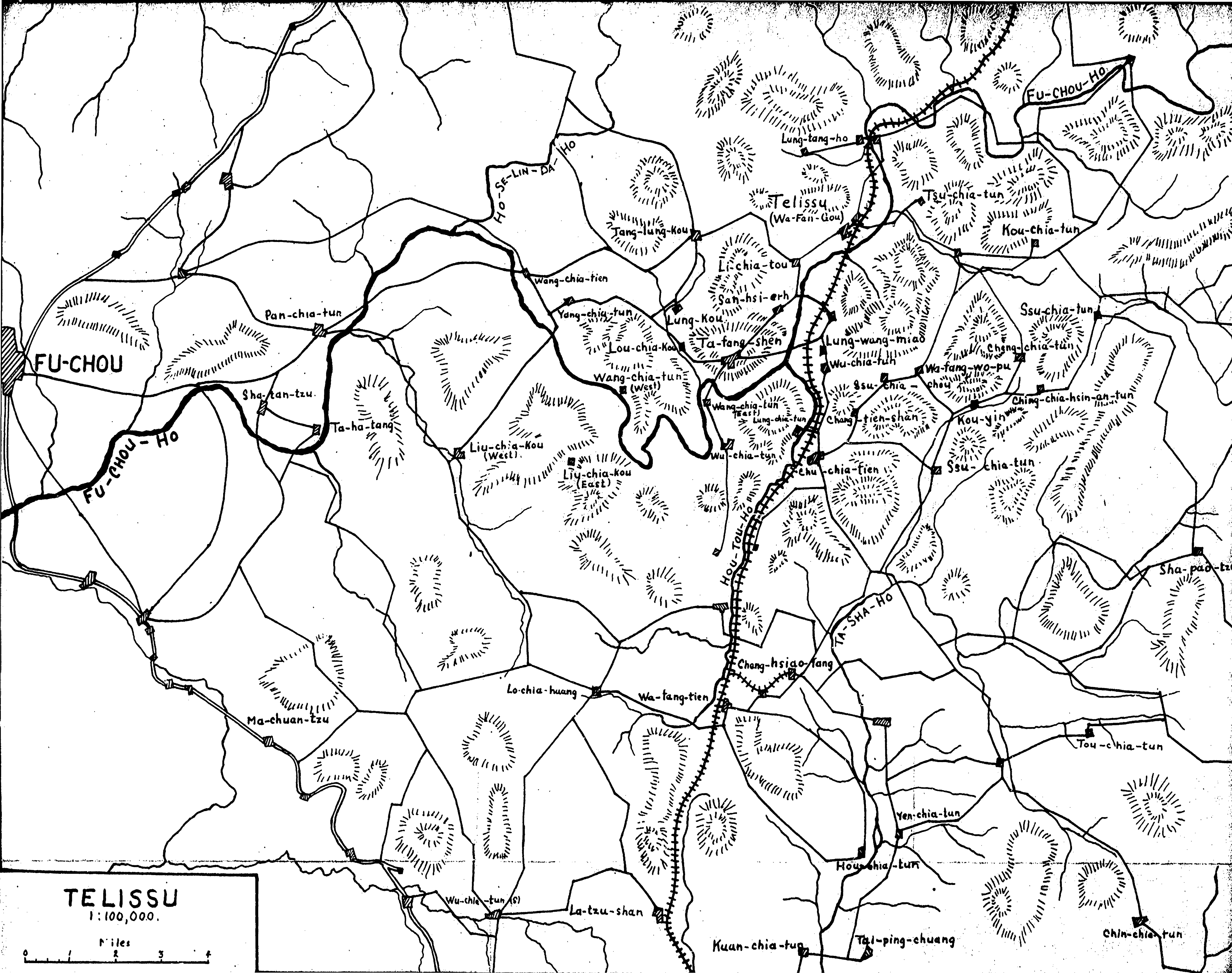
b. Conclusions.

A careful consideration of the orders and actions of the two principal Russian commanders concerned with the battle of Wa-fang-gou shows:

that Kuropatkin failed as a leader by his indecision and his failure to assign Stackelburg a definite clear out mission and to provide him with the means for carrying it out;

that Stackelburg lacked aggressiveness, and by failing to appreciate the advantage offered him by taking and retaining the initiative, he was too willing to give up the offensive merely because he believed the enemy would take it; that he failed to use and direct the means available to him to secure the information which he needed so badly, and finally, after arriving at a decision, he failed to make a proper plan and to issue proper orders for carrying out his decision to the best advantage.

W. M. Goodman.
W. M. GOODMAN,
Major, C.A.C.



FU-CHOU

FU-CHOU - Ho

FU-CHOU - Ho

Ho-SE-LIN-DA-HO

Lung-tang-ho

Telissu
(Wa-Fan-Gou)

Tsu-chia-tun

Kou-chia-tun

Pan-chia-tun

Sha-tan-tzu

Ta-ha-tang

Wang-chia-tien

Yang-chia-tun

Lou-chia-Kou

Wang-chia-tun (West)

Liu-chia-Kou (West)

Liu-chia-Kou (East)

Lung-Kou

Ta-fang-shen

Lung-wang-miao

Wu-chia-tun

Ssu-chia-tun

Cheng-chia-tun

Wa-fang-wo-pu

Ching-chia-hsin-an-tun

Kou-yin

Ssu-chia-tun

Wang-chia-tun (East)

Lung-chia-tun

Wu-chia-tun

Chu-chia-tien

Hou-Tou-Ho

TA-SHA-HO

Chang-hsiao-fang

Lo-chia-huang

Wa-fang-tien

Ma-chuan-tzu

Tou-chia-tun

Yen-chia-tun

Hou-chia-tun

La-tzu-shan

Wu-chia-tun (S)

Kuan-chia-tun

Tai-ping-chuang

Chin-chia-tun

TELISSU

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Miles



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Key: (3-31.) = No. 3 text (below) page 31.

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